(b) whether this proposed cess will be in addition to the Passenger Service Fee being levied by AAI and the Congestion Surcharge imposed by private carriers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) The matter is under consideration of the Government.

Cess to fund AERA operations

148. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the competition Commission of India has recommended that the proposed Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA) should impose a cess on airline companies and operators to fund its operations;

(b) if so, whether this proposed cess is likely to be passed on to the air traveller by the carriers; and

(c) whether the fuel surcharge presently levied is likely to be reduced on account of fall in Aviation Turbine fuel prices?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) For financial independence of the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA), Competition Commission of India (CCI) had proposed that there must be a provision in law to levy some kind of charge on the sector that it is going to regulate as a source of revenue.

(b) There is no proposal to levy such cess.

(c) Air fares are not regulated by the Government after repeal of Air Corporation Act, 1953. Domestic Airlines are free to charge air fares, including any surcharge in their commercial judgement.

Foreign Pilots in Aviation Industry

149. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that expatriate pilots are increasingly becoming a part of India's aviation industry and are poised to out number their Indian counterparts due to increasing demand for pilots; and

(b) if so, the steps Government propose to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Airlines are allowed to bring expatriate pilots only on the basis of their plan for phasing out foreign pilots and training Indian pilots to replace the foreign pilots. Therefore, expatriate pilots are not poised to outnumber their Indian counterparts.

(b) The Government has taken various steps to reduce the gap between demand and supply of skilled Indian pilots. These include, conditionally increasing the age-limit to 65 years for exercising the privileges of their licences for commercial transport operations, upgradation and modernisation of training infrastructure of Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Uran Akademi (IGRUA) to enhance its training capacity, setting up of a world class flying training institute at Gondia, Maharashtra and assistance to flying clubs by allocating trainer aircraft through Directorate General of Civil Aviation/Aero Club of India.

Strength of foreign pilots in India

150. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of foreign pilots engaged in Indian aircrafts;

(b) the ratio between Indian pilots and the foreign pilots; and

(c) the demand-supply position in India and other countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) There are approximately 560 foreign pilots engaged in India at present.

(b) The ratio between Indian and foreign pilots is 6:1 approximately.

(c) the present demand supply ratio of pilot in India is 7:6. The demand supply position varies from country to country and from time to time and reliable estimates in this regard are not available.

Training for landing in poor visibility conditions

151. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of flights of all the airlines operating in the country